

MISSION FIELD.

The New Hebrides.

We give the following extracts from Rev. Fred. Paton's journal—January, 1895, to April 19th, 1895:—

Our New Year celebrations were held on New Year's Day, and teachers and others were up all the previous night cooking puddings.

The church only held half of those who came to our early service. People of several languages were present, and one native of Anlva (Paul) gave a capital address, first in broken English and after in Pangkuman.

500 people came from Mr. Leggatt's district on the one side to fourteen miles on the other side. To our joy, many broke caste by eating with us. The Pangkuman natives had given me over half-a-ton of yams as a gift. During the day these were all eaten, and also seven pigs, three fowls, one goat, rice in great pots, and breadfruit and coconuts in great numbers. When all had gone, there was not a yam on the premises.

The sports lasted about six hours. They shot poorly with bow and arrow, though generally very expert marksmen. Boys climbed the greasy pole in their shirts, and next day there was an eager enquiry for soap. Some men appeared for the first time in trousers, and were unable to run in the races, as they were not used to their new coverings.

The heathen triumphed over my teachers in the "tug-of-war," but one teacher so excelled in vaulting, jumping, and "putting" the weight, that a heathen chief crowned him with dracaena leaves, their laurel crown.

"Leap frog" was explained to them, and in the blazing afternoon sun fifty were playing it till the perspiration streamed. The spectators yelled with excitement. The Siamese race began well, but only four couples reached the end, the rest having come to grief over each other.

At night we had a display of fireworks, rockets and stars being favorites. One cracker exploded, nearly damaging Thomas and myself. The natives considered this cracker the best of all. Over 100 slept on the mission premises at night, but all ended without any trouble whatever.

On January 2nd, over 200 natives attended our usual Wednesday prayer meeting. After it the women and girls had races, being bashful the day before! While I was in the house getting prizes, wild yells arose. I found that the old women had had a tug-of-war with the young ones. The seniors won easily, being led by an old grandmother.

On Sabbath, 20th January, our afternoon service was most cheering, but it was hardly over when a woman bolted. She was chased and brought back, but the chief excitement was as to whether she had taken or left a feeding bottle I had lent her baby! There was no feeling of morality about the natives. One boy near the village shouted the news as the "row" progressed: One is swearing; both are swearing; they are all swearing. Finally the only innocent woman was thrashed, and peace restored by two bolting.

There are sick babies. I have no feeding bottle. At present I put an old teat on to the spout of an invalid cup. The teat is much worn and the cup is not the thing. Should any reader feel impelled to send me a baby's feeding bottle and several mouth-pieces, the gift and the name of the giver will be gratefully acknowledged in a future journal.

Sometimes the boys would not work for untold money, but lately I told them my father and sister were coming, and for a fortnight they have worked hard. We have the walks re-coralled, the teachers' houses white lime-washed, the mission house washed, cleaned, and painted white. The house-painting was my work, and was hard in this weather, viz., heavy rain or blazing sun. I have much sympathy for all house-painters now.

The Pangkumans have almost finished a fence of two miles round their village. At one end the fence runs into the sea, and the other end goes on to a precipice. The fence will keep the pigs from going outside. Formerly they injured the yams. The building of this fence has kept the heathen out of mischief. Now they wish to make a mangke, or heathen dance. These dancers always cause evil and trouble, and we hoped they would not attempt one. However, the pigs have an epidemic of mumps, and many are dying. Without pigs, there can be no mangke, and I believe this is a direct intervention of Providence.

We hold a night class now, at which the natives learn writing, reading of English, and sing English hymns. Twice a week we have Bible history, so that those who come to us are more in earnest though fewer than six months ago. Lately some of our chief church attenders gave up school, and would not come near me. The heathen were jubilant. A piece of wood had struck my eye, and my knee was swollen. I put on dark spectacles, and with two

sticks hobbled out after the ringleaders. After an earnest talk, all came back humble and friendly.

There has been much sickness among many deaths. The people have had sore eyes, but simple medicines have cured that.

Alec Moan, a baptised native from Sydney, landed in October, dying of consumption. He was with us four months, and despite careful nursing, died on Sabbath, 17th Feb., just before dawn. The day before, I had sent for his great friend, Charlie Lean, and both sang many hymns, and Alec was very bright. His whole conduct had shown love for and trust in Jesus. He passed away peacefully, the only sign of consciousness being the way in which he clung to my hand. His coffin was a canoe, in which his half-brothers had often paddled.

I had hoped for so much from his example, and was quite overcome. The teacher led the prayers. We buried him on a hillside, near the grave of a teacher who was murdered in Mr. Morton's time. The early sun glinted through the trees, and the sweet smell of the morning dew was about us as we sang "There is a Happy Land" in the native tongue.

On my birthday, 5th March, a little girl died—the first school-attending child to die. She knew a little about Jesus, and every evening in her little hut the natives heard her sing and pray to Jesus. She sent for me an hour before dying, but the message was not brought. The children of Pangkumu sang around her grave. We believe Jesus took her home.

During Mr. Gillan's absence, I was left in temporary charge of his station. His boat visited Pangkumu four times, on one occasion leaving a teacher's sick wife. She is now strong.

I visited Mr. Gillan's station twice, the last visit being for five days. I saw each of his out-stations. His teachers were in good health, and have done well in his absence, though all are longing for the return of Mr. and Mrs. Gillan.

On Saturday, 13th April, I visited an outstation, Tieman, and found much excitement, four other natives and two Malekulans had been drunk and had frightened the villagers. In one village the children had had to take refuge in the teacher's house. As they received drink from a French ship, we cannot stop it.

I slept at Tieman in my hammock. The local teacher has a spring bed which was decked with snowy linen, but I did not like to deprive him of it. Natives wandered about all night, sleepless owing to mosquitoes.

On Sabbath, after a hasty breakfast we left by moonlight to go to a bush village. This village is farther inland than perhaps any white man has been yet. By the teacher's advice I went barefoot, as the road was muddy, and have been lame since. We climbed for three miles along a rough path. At one precipice I asked where the road was—"Round the corner." "Were there many places like this?" "Hundreds." We got "round the corner" somehow, and it proved the worst place on the road. The morning sun showed a lovely view from the lofty hills. Island after island lay asleep on the calm sea. The beautiful white sand edged the coast of Malekula. The lighter green of coconuts and palms rose above the other trees, and the rising mist made a beautiful lake of the valley below. It was a view to remember, and thank God for having seen. Along the road were ferns, and shrubs with leaves of every color. The bush village contained 30 inhabitants, 23 came to service, one man in white defiance from a distance. There were not eager natives ready to drink in the good news, nor was there a missionary with immense book, in broad clerical hat, black suit, and with big umbrella. The real scene was this: A sunburnt missionary in soft hat, white clothes very muddy, trousers rolled up to the knees, and bare legs and feet covered with black mud. Ten natives who went with him were equally muddy. Their dress was 10 shirts, 3 trousers, 7 lava-lavas, and a few hats. Twenty-three bush people sat about and listened with seeming carelessness and indifference. Pigs squealed and wandered round, and dogs played among the audience. I lent my stick to a native teacher, and he kept order within reach of his arm. To an outsider this service would have been an intense disappointment. It requires faith in God to believe that this village will yet earnestly worship Him. And we have that faith, having proved God's power in other villages.

The chief was afraid to have a teacher placed in the village. We had an earnest talk with him about the world to come and Jesus' love, and then left. A little Pangkuman girl has been sold to an old man, as his wife No. 2.

By special request of their husbands, some native women and girls come every week to learn to sew. This request from natives is a sign of full confidence in me, and is meant for an honor by the natives. I receive it as such. At present they wash, scrub floors, and keep the garden and premises free of weeds. They also learn to sew.

A young man and girl made a love match six months ago. The husband brought nearly 100 lbs. of yam to buy his wife a dress. Both were equally interested in the purchase and consulted carefully. I suggested the suitability of one dress. My remarks were graciously approved, and the dress taken. The wife departed radiant, and the man content and important.

All our people look forward to the visit of my father and Minn, and we have all ready to give them a loyal welcome.

Pangkumu, Malekula.

19th April 1895.